

Elections And The Sikhs

By A.S. Narang

When the last session of Eighth Lok Sabha, which was due to expire in January 1990, ended in a way abruptly, all sections of people alike have begun to entertain serious doubts about conduct of elections on time. Even within the ruling Congress(I) party circles nobody was in a position to predict or state about the conduct of the next elections. The Election Commission might be ready to hold the elections at any time, but it was also equally kept in dark about the exact dates. Ultimately when a sudden announcement for elections for 22 to 26 November 1989 was made, it took many by surprise, caught some unaware and put some in some type of dilemma. In dilemma, apart from some others, were the minority groups.

In view of the tense communal atmosphere prevailing in the country and overt or covert support being extended by some of the major parties, including the ruling

party, to majority chauvanism, minority groups are faced with a situation of threat to their identity and security. Therefore, in spite of the fact that no religious or cultural group is a homogeneous group in terms of economic and class interests they are being forced to think and behave as a monolithic group.

Upto 1970s, because of the Congress appreciation for secularism and its systematic strategy to win over the support of the poor and the core minorities, these groups have in general been supporting it.

While voters in India have been perceiving themselves not as independent individuals but as members of primary collectivities (caste, religion, etc.) yet the voting act has not been isolated from the socio-economic setting. In this context ruling party's support has been fluctuating significantly. And in 1977 it had to suffer defeat at national level also.

The situation before 1984 elections was also quite such. Perceiving threat to its power, and realising that minorities were no more prepared to support it enblock and blindly, as part of the

ruling party's election strategy Mrs. Indira Gandhi encouraged the communal leaders to get support from the Hindus, to preach and propagate about the imaginary threats that the country was facing from both internal and external forces. While this helped Congress tremendously, particularly after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and its projection in communal terms, it also threatened the position of parties like B.J.P. which had roots in R.S.S. As a result after 1984 elections BJP came back to communalism with vengeance and not only started supporting the Hindu chauvanism but also adopted it as part of its programme as that of Ram Janam Bhumi. On the eve of 1989 elections minorities are thus faced with communal threat of both varieties—covert and overt.

Though so far the Janata Dal and National Front have behaved reasonably well as far as communal question is concerned and its stand on minority issues has been reasonably appreciable, but National Front's efforts for seat adjustments with BJP, which in the given situation is imperative, it has

aroused some misgivings in a section of minorities. These may be misconceived and exaggerated but are there to create confusion.

In this background Sikh voters also seem to be in a state of confusion. Of course being only 1.96% of India's population their behaviour in elections does not count much. Even this percentage of population is divided into Sikhs in Punjab and outside Punjab. While in Punjab, Sikhs constitute 60.7% of its population, outside Punjab they matter only, of course very little, in Chandigarh 21.1%, Haryana 6.2%, Delhi 6.3% J & K 2.2% and Himachal Pradesh 4%. In no other State or Union Territory they are even 1% of population. However, their majority in Punjab, concentration in some constituencies of Haryana and Delhi and vocal nature have their own importance.

Within Punjab upto 1980s Sikhs have been divided on the basis of caste, class, urban-rural, and intra-caste class differences. Though a majority of them, particularly in rural areas, have been Akali supporters, Congress, CPI

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Congress(I) Is The Most Communal Party In India

By Khushwant Singh

Soon after the news appeared that I have proposed the candidature of the BJP president L K Advani—the opposition candidate from New Delhi in the forthcoming elections to the Parliament—I have been flooded with a spate of phone calls. The Congress(I) leaders in particular have expressed their anguish in no uncertain terms on this score. When Jag Pravesh Chandra—Chief Executive Councillor, Delhi—spoke to me and asked if I were not ashamed to associate myself with a communal party like BJP, which has entered into an electoral alliance with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, I told him that on the contrary he should feel ashamed because the Congress party had given tickets to men like HKL Bhagat, Dharam Dass Shastri and Jagdish Tytler, who had been found guilty for their role during November 1984 riots. In

fact I am convinced that the Congress party is the most communal party on the Indian political scenario.

Advani is a personal friend. He is a very clean and honest politician. I have a great respect for him as a politician and people like him are very very rare. People like him don't exist in this country any more. I don't accept the labels of communalism. It was the Congress leaders who instigated mobs in 1984 and got more than 3000 people killed. I must give due credit to RSS and the BJP for showing courage and protecting helpless Sikhs during those difficult days. No less than a person like Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself intervened at a couple of places to help poor taxi drivers.

As far as Congress(I) is concerned, they have been convicted in my eye by three independent commissions of inquiry. Not one member of these commissions was a Sikh. People like Justice Sikri, a Judge like Tarkunde were associated with these commissions. They clearly pointed an accusing finger at some of the

Congress leaders. Three of them are the Congress candidates in Delhi in the 1989 election. It is rather disgusting.

With what face can the Congress party dub the BJP communal. The most communal organization today is the Congress party—this must be stressed time and again. What did they do in Hashimpura, where innocent Muslims were lined up and shot. Has anyone been punished for that? This incident has also taken place where incidentally they have a Congress government in power.

I dismiss the labels with contempt that this party is communal and the other party is non-communal. The Congress party has also made an alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala. Such examples are total refutations that some parties are communal, while the others are secular.

In the present atmosphere, I have no doubt in my mind that there would be crystalization on communal lines particularly the atmosphere created by Babri Masjid-Ram Janam Bhoomi, Shila

puja started by Vishwa Hindu Parishad, emergence of fundamentalism amongst all the communities. This has been the fall out of the atmosphere that has been created in this country. Who created this atmosphere? I am not sure except that the government which has ruled the country for five years and has allowed this atmosphere to develop, I think they cannot be exonerated from their responsibility.

I don't think that communalism has been so much in the picture or focus in any general elections in the past than it is evident in the present Lok Sabha elections. Not only that, what is more worrying is the fact that along with communal elements, large number of criminal elements are also there. And a person like me is concerned about the quality of representatives who would make it to the ninth Lok Sabha. I would be surprised if a few good persons can make it to the Parliament this time in this communally surcharged atmosphere.

— PUBLIK ASIA

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LETTERS



A Scar On Our Conscience

The fifth anniversary of one of the most shameful episodes in the history of Independent India, is upon us. Between October 31 and November 3, 1984, over 2500 innocent men, women and children, mostly Sikhs, were brutally murdered, in an orgy of violence orchestrated by the ruling party. To add insult to injury, neither justice nor retribution have been forthcoming. Five years after the Delhi massacres, the survivors, most of them poor and helpless, are still waiting for justice to be rendered to them and for punishment to be meted out to their tormentors. To date, the government has acted with class difference to the plight of the survivors and the relatives of the dead. It is a matter of shame that virtually none of the criminals who are known to have been involved in the shameful events, following the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, have been brought to book or punished.

While unequivocally condemning the government's studied callousness and apathy towards the helpless and long-suffering victims of the Delhi massacres, we call upon it, even at this very late stage, to right the wrongs done years ago.

Hm Seerval, Saa Pinto,
Jean Kalgutkar, Yogeshkamdar
PUCL Bombay

For The Right And Left

This month, the people of India will have an opportunity to elect members for the Ninth Lok Sabha and give their verdict on the performance of the ruling party.

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The performance of the ruling party has been incredibly poor. More importantly, it has deliberately and systematically emasculated, dishonoured and denigrated all our cherished institutions. There has come about a coalition between crime and politics. Corruption has become all pervasive. The standards of public life have reached a nadir. With this experience of the last four to five years, it may be taken for granted that if the ruling party is again returned to power, all our hallowed institutions will be destroyed and all the resources and the instruments of the State, including Doordarshan and AIR, will be brazenly, blatantly and unabashedly pressed into the service of the ruling party and its leader.

Unfortunately, there is not much cohesion in the ranks of the Opposition. There is some semblance of unity in the Opposition but for imparting credibility to its appeal its leaders must demonstrate that they have forsaken their inflated egos, petty prejudices and unreasonable, personal ambitions and are quite prepared to act in unison. If returned to power and if its leaders act with sagacity and wisdom, the Opposition can give a reasonably good account of itself by functioning as a broad coalition of parties. It is also possible that they will act foolishly and prove themselves to be incorrigible. In that case they will have to be discarded and others elected in their place.

So the electorate faces a choice between a sort of mafia rule and rule by people who may not act in unison and thus prove themselves incompetent to rule. The choice is thus between certain destruction of the system and risk of some period of instability. The choice, though not rosy, is not difficult.

Mind you, the catastrophe of the ruling party's again being returned to power can be averted only if there are one-to-one contests and the splitting of votes is avoided. If Stalin and Churchill could forget their opposite and conflicting ideologies for fighting Hitler, cannot our leaders of the so-called Right and Left act in unison to defeat the ruling party?

R.S. Dangayach
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Subversion Of Socialism

Are more changes likely to take place in Eastern Europe? Economic liberalisation may come to stay, but the danger is that with capitalist leaders being accommodated in the political system, the incumbent ill of capitalism may gradually give way to corruption, influence of money power in politics. Subversion of Socialism may also be witnessed in the years to come. Such developments are unfortunate and the people may have to learn their lessons the hard way in these States. Communism need not to go the capitalist way.

(Miss) Manjit Kaur
New Delhi

Readers are requested to send in their letters typewritten or neatly handwritten to the Editor, Forum Gazette, 3 Masjid Road, Jangpura, Bhogal, New Delhi 110 014. Letters may be edited for clarity.

Sound And Fury

The Prime Minister either did not know anything or knew too much (about the Bofors deal).

—Mr N. Ram, Associate Editor of the Hindu.

They (the Opposition) are anti-people, anti-development, anti-Scheduled Castes and anti-women.

—Mr Rajiv Gandhi.

The Mahabharat serial is the biggest advertisement for the Janata Dal as the Election Commission has allotted the wheel as a symbol for the party.

—Mr Biju Patnaik.

The hour of change has struck.

—Mr Rajmohan Gandhi.

My father abolished zamindari from Uttar Pradesh. I am not ready to accept anybody's political zamindari in my home district.

—Mr K.C. Pant.

We want to damage chances of both (Congress-I and Janata Dal)

—Mr Indubhai Patel, Janata Party president.

Mud-slinging has become the way of politics today.

—Mr Chandra Shekhar.

I want to keep out of party politics.

—Shabana Azmi.

I refuse to be measured by the Left or the Right.

—Mr V.P. Singh.

All cartoons cannot be against V.P. Singh; some must be against Rajiv Gandhi also.

—Sudhir Dar quoted in The Independent.

I am not interested in defeating Mr Rajiv Gandhi the man, but the Prime Minister who lords over us and whose style of functioning is feudal.

—Mr Kanshi Ram.

Ours is one party. There is no distinction between Congress (S) and the Congress(I).

—Mr Sharad Pawar.

We will have no access to TV and AIR, but we have access to people's hearts.

—Mr Devi Lal.

I will never align myself with the Janata Dal. I am not one of those who change colours just because power shifts from one party to another.

—Dr Farooq Abdullah.

I depend on myself and run my own election machinery.

—Mr Ashoke Sen.

As a responsible Governor, I cannot say that a stable Government can be formed (in Punjab).

—Mr Siddhartha Shankar Ray.

I have known womanhood only in the form of a mother or sister or wife.

—Mr Z.R. Ansari.

NEWSHOUND

RATS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED IN THE WHITE HOUSE — THEY ARE BEING DESTROYED!



By Rap

LUCKY YOU! THE RATS IN RACE COURSE ROAD ARE SO WELL DISGUISED THAT THEY CAN'T EVEN BE IDENTIFIED!



The
FORUM
Gazette

- Minority Rights
- Civil Liberties
- Equality For Women
- Democratic Values
- Environmental Protection

The Next General Election

The next general election is going to be unlike the last four general elections. In each one of them there was a political wave. Consequently, the verdict of the electorate was decisive.

This time it does not look like that. In all probability the election would not return a very definite verdict in favour of any party. The ruling party could return as the largest single party. But the opposite can also happen. Nobody can be very definite in regard to the eventual outcome.

If the outcome is uncertain, as is the perception of most people, what would happen? Whoever forms the government may not be able to provide stability. Should that come to pass, the opposition (whoever it is) would try to defeat the government and may succeed in doing so. In that case another government would be formed. Whether that too can survive in office or not would be an open question. In two to three years, the country might have to go to polls again.

Would that be good thing? Our view is that it would be so. There is a lot of muck in both the centrist parties. It needs to be cast out. The current trends, however, show that that has not happened and a large number of undesirable people, including some with criminal records and quite a number of them with criminal tendencies, can be elected to Parliament. The fact of the matter is that lack of scruples and absence of integrity characterise the almost as much as they do the ruling party. Whatever ails Indian political life is to be found in abundance in both these conglomerations. What is needed is a thorough cleansing and, may be, that will be provided only by a subsequent general election.

What is to be done now, however? This is a problem bothering a large number of people. Our view is that the ruling party needs to be defeated. It is unclean. It is unscrupulous. More than that, it is a force in favour of that brand of politics which has been played during the last couple of decades. Its performance during the last five years has been disappointing. The manner in which it captured power was totally disgraceful. All these years criminals have been given positions of ministerial responsibility and the whole organization is shot through with rank corruption as well as criminal use of religious susceptibilities. Nobody can predict today what will happen even tomorrow. With a rash of riots during the last few weeks, anything even more deadly can happen and it may happen.

The National Front, relatively speaking, is much better. Though criminal elements are there in a few cases, its functioning is much cleaner. Casteism, factionalism and various other vices are however as much embedded in its working as in the ruling party. But, on balance, this combination is to be preferred for a number of reasons.

The most important of them is that India today is afflicted by what is known as dynastic rule. So many of the problems in our polity flow from this single fact, including the unanswerable charge that the Prime Minister has blood on his hands. There are so many other things too for which he has to answer but none of them is more lethal than this that the killers of 1984 have not been brought to book. This was a part of the political strategy adopted in 1984 and it is this strategy which requires to be rejected.

The ruling party is particularly weak in the Hindi speaking belt. Partly it is loss of credibility on its part and partly it is the gradual emergence of the BJP as a political force. At the end of the general election, the BJP is likely to be almost as strong as the CPM and the CPI. In the opinion of some people it could be even stronger than that. One does not know.

The growth of Hindu fundamentalism is a bigger menace than any other kind of fundamentalism. That is because, if the majority votes against secularism, it works out against the interests of the minorities. The minorities can be safe only as long as the majority is inclined to give them a fair deal. Once it gets inclined the other way, the situation becomes critical for them. And this is precisely what is happening.

There are people who are confused as to whom they should vote for. They reject the ruling party for the crimes that it has committed. They do not accept the BJP for the crimes that it might commit. It is a difficult choice, no doubt. But a choice would have to be made by every voter. The left is not so strong in northern India and, therefore, a choice between them is unavoidable.

We leave it to our readers to decide how in the given set of circumstances they should vote. There is no single formula which is applicable to every constituency. So much would depend upon the local candidate and the local situation. The overarching fact, however, has to be that the ruling party must be defeated. If it returns to power it means more misery for the common man. And more criminalisation of the polity.

Complexities Of Indian Election

By K. Ganesan

Sir Anthony Eden, a former British Prime Minister had described India's democracy as a very exciting phenomenon. In both magnitude and sweep it is not only unprecedented but is something that could not be even dreamt of by other countries. The founding fathers of the republic had deep and abiding faith in our people. That was why they boldly opted for adult suffrage in spite of widespread illiteracy and poverty. India's unbroken tradition and ageless culture have stood the test of time. Constructive synthesis has been the keynote of that tradition. And the people at large did not belie the trust which was reposed in them. From the very beginning they had used their franchise diligently and decisively. The shrewd Commonsense and innate intelligence of our people, especially of our rural folk, have stood them in good stead and helped them in using their right of franchise with telling effect.

Complex Exercise

Geographical and social diversities have made elections in India a complex exercise. There are as many as 543 Parliamentary Constituencies spread over 25 States and 7 Union Territories. Their locations are also varied ranging from high altitude areas in snow-clad mountain ranges to scattered islands in the high seas. Some of the Constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Some of the Constituencies are backward economically and in the matter of communications. Our electoral machinery has to take into account all these diversities and difficulties while holding general elections. Polling booths have to be set up for as a few as 15 to 20 electors in the higher regions of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and for as many as 1400 in cities. Some of our Constituencies like Bastar in Madhya Pradesh are as big as Scotland (area-wise). Then again the electorate per Parliamentary Constituency in bigger States and metropolitan cities range from 10 lakhs to 18 lakhs. These should give a fair idea of the magnitude of the tasks of preparation and updating of electoral rolls before every general election. No other country undertakes house to house enumeration of voters for updating the electoral list as is done in India. Other countries just provide facilities for eligible persons to get themselves enrolled in the electoral rolls. Preparation of the electoral rolls is in itself a

gigantic task. India's present electorate consists of 498.6 million people who are eligible to vote.

The Polling

The electoral machinery faces a much more difficult and formidable task when it comes to the conduct of the actual poll. The number of polling stations in the country is about five lakhs. In addition to the returning officers deputed to each Constituency a

The success of any democratic election depends on three basic factors. They are: an independent electoral machinery fully equipped to hold the elections; candidates and political parties who observe the ground rules strictly, both in letter and spirit; and, an enlightened electorate who are determined to exercise their franchise fearlessly and in a free manner without being inhibited in any manner by considerations like religion, caste, sect, etc.

large number of assistant returning Officers, area supervisors, presiding officers and polling officers have also to be deployed to each polling station. The total number of personnel required may be around 35 lakhs. The number of personnel belonging to State and Central Police forces, civil defence forces and para-military organizations deployed for the maintenance of law and order is over and above the above-mentioned 35 lakhs.

Ballot Papers

Ballot papers are printed on a special kind of paper. The estimated requirement is about 5,000 to 6,000 metric tonnes of paper, each tonne costing about Rs. 18,000. Innumerable other items like voting stamps, pads, ballot boxes and scores of other materials are also required. All means of transport are made use of for transporting men and material to and from polling booths.

About 500 million ballot papers required for the poll are to be printed in about 20 different languages in about fifteen days. They have also to be thoroughly checked and despatched to each and every polling station under strict security.

The entire operation covering the whole nation has to be accomplished with speed and accuracy. The electoral machinery consisting of government servants has to work with zeal, enthusiasm and dedication to make the entire electoral process a success. By and large the machinery has stood up to the task.

Stresses And Strains

Unhealthy and unethical practices by some candidates cause stresses and strains on the smooth functioning of our electoral machinery. They manifest in the form of money power and muscle power which try to influence and interfere in the democratic process. There are enough built-in safeguards in the election laws of the country to prevent such influences and interferences. But their successful implementation depends on a very large extent on the faith of the people in our system of elections. Only a strong public opinion can checkmate corrupt practices. The people should be made to realise that it is their responsibility and sacred duty to ensure that the electoral procedure is not tempered with in any way.

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The whole world is watching with interest the ensuing general elections in India. Its smooth conduct and success will not only strengthen the roots of Indian democracy but will also inspire other countries and other people to follow the democratic path.

Elections And The Sikhs

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and independents have also been getting their votes in substantial numbers. Since then there has been emerging consolidation of Sikh solidarity. On the eve of 1985 elections, Operation Bluestar, the massive deployment of the armed forces in the state and anti-Sikh riots outside Punjab had greatly embittered the. For the first time a bigger consolidation than ever before of the Sikh vote took place. Overcoming the caste-class and regional differences they voted for the Akali Dal in general.

It was expected that after 1985 elections and implementation of

Punjab Accord the politics of the State will be back on rails and normal democratic and interest-based differences will emerge. But non-implementation of Punjab Accord, dismissal of popularly elected government, increased state oppression, widespread corruption, (particularly in the police) and continuous dithering by the centre has left the Sikhs in Punjab even more bitter. These factors have also helped in the consolidation of a counter-elite. This counter-elite is not being nursed only by fundamentalism but also by residual Naxalite elements in Punjab. This has eroded the cred-

ibility and unity of Akali Dal. Thus in Punjab there is a strong anti-centre feeling, but no strong group

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to provide it a democratic channelisation. Akali leaders engaged in one-upmanship game are a house

divided. So the dilemma and confusion.

Outside Punjab, as in Haryana and Delhi, the position of Sikhs is paradoxical: as a religious community, they are a part of the main body of Sikhs in Punjab and yet have the obligation to live of their

places of their inhabitation are also dear to them. These are the only homes most of them have known after the partition of the country.

This position create conflicting tendencies in them: they cannot help being influenced by the developments in Punjab but because of the unique interests they have developed outside, they cannot approach these developments in exactly the same way as the Punjab Sikhs do. Needless to say the ruling party also exploits these differences and aggravates them to its advantage. As one scholar suggests, quite often these differences are between those who are collaborationists and seek economic gains for the Sikhs through cooperation with the government and those whose primary emphasis is on a distinct religious identity of Sikhs.

Since the former have no political perspective on the Sikh situation substantially different from that of the government and the latter believe in a sort of isolationism without understanding the Sikh situation and psyche, neither is able to guide the Sikhs in a meaningful way. In the absence of a well-thought out and viable political perspective the Sikh behaviour in elections remain to be largely influenced by personalit.

However, memories of November 1984 carnage and ruling party's attitude towards that have not died from the minds of the Sikhs in general. Moreover as parts of society in general they are equally victims of ever increasing corruption, inflation and inefficiency. Government's, dealing and dithering on Punjab keeps them emotionally surcharged. As a whole their psyche remains hurt. At the same time they also have suspicion about BJP's designs, particularly of its status and role if Congress(I) is replaced. A section of Sikh leadership is tackling this some what intelligently. Their argument is that an overt communal party can better be dealt with than a covert one. Second the BJP is not likely to be a part of the National Front government. Third past experience suggests that once closer to power even communal parties have to exercise moderation because the nature and plurality of Indian society does not allow to be otherwise. And above all is the argument that change is the call of the hour.

Thus both in Punjab and outside while the Sikhs are not likely to vote enblock in Punjab they are generally likely to vote with an anti-centre thrust. The division and consolidation will depend on the factionalism and behaviour of Akalis, and understanding between opposition parties. Outside Punjab caught in emotional attachments and apprehensive of security of life and property they are likely to vote for the likely winning parties with a tilt towards Janata Dal and its allies. The articulated elite of course is likely to side with the opposition than to the Congress. How far this elite can consolidate the masses depends on factors which will emerge during next two weeks.

THIS WAS THE MAN

He loved India and the Indian people with all his mind and heart, and they, in turn, gave him of their love most abundantly and extravagantly.



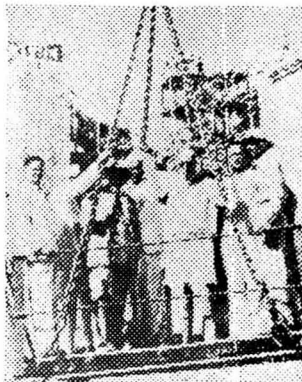
To the down-trodden, to the underprivileged, to the oppressed, he became the very personification of freedom.



"How can a nation rise, if half the nation, if our womenkind lag behind?" He posed this question and worked incessantly for the uplift of Indian women.



"I want work and work and work. I want achievement. I want men who work as crusaders"



Building India was His Passion

dayp 89/738

Vote For Death

By Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (Retd.)

Do only Chanderi fields stink of rotting flesh or the whole of India has been stinking over a period of the last five years in the Golden Temple, in the fields, in jails, in trains, in wells, in rivers and in the canals of India.

The month of November since 1984 has been a bloody one and it is becoming day by day bloodier and is most likely to become the bloodiest if our government does not act meaningfully to save the nation from dreaded events jingling with naked warning concerned with Babri Masjid and Ram Janam Bhoomi. It is an unfortunate situation that only a very small number of intellectuals have been shaken towards their responsibility. The way police have displayed its sense of discipline and acted with arrogance towards its citizens in Uttar Pradesh to its citizens accepted under oath and people in hundreds having been butchered and some of them burnt alive and dumped in the nearby wells, ponds and fields in Bhagalpur.

cries of victims of the attackers. This point should not be left at this only, the over all effect is destructive to the faith of minorities through out the country, and on the so-called democratic and secularistic umbrella is concerned. However, the nation must confront the government with a question, as to why this disease has been allowed to leap forward in an armed body instead of deadening it?

The Congress(I) is lamenting BJP for raking up communal troubles along with VHP to woo Hindu voters. But all the opposition parties and organizations dealing with human rights are staunchly holding the government responsible for the same, since it has not taken any steps to stop VHP from proceeding to Ayodhya for laying the foundation stone for the temple when the dispute is already being processed in the court.

It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was gheraoed by the Hindu policemen against the transfer orders on the SP, Mr.

The mental make up of the police have proved to be the same in the case of Bhagalpur massacre as was in November 1984 in Delhi which consumed 5000 Sikhs and burning of 300 Gurdwaras and the citizens' private properties

In spite of the Army's dedicated disciplined role to protect the life and property of the unfortunates, the nation could not prevent them from the communalised butchery of police. The police's bad discipline stemming out of communal colour will have to be examined for its adverse effect on the minds of army Jawans as it has hurt their conscience, the police having betrayed their trust for doing away with the life of those who were entrusted to them.

The communal fervour has reached its peak when Hindu policemen refused to obey their Muslim officers. The army should not falter as it did during Operation Blue Star for not warning the government to making soldier to operate with communalised civil law and order setups. The mental make up of the police have proved to be the same in the case of Bhagalpur massacre as was in November 1984 in Delhi which consumed 5000 Sikhs and burning of 300 Gurdwaras and the citizens' private properties.

The most unfortunate part is that no policeman or any one else who committed the crimes have even been brought to the book. Had the guilty policemen been punished in 1984 the Bihar police would have been deterred from working under communal frenzy and turning their blind eyes and deaf ears to the

K.H. Twivdi. His transfer orders were cancelled on the spot, instead of Prime Minister admonishing the police and showing his anger to local Hindus for killing hundreds of Muslims. Here the question which strikes one's mind is that the voters being wooed to have again the killers' government or the government which would account for each and every drop of blood of the nation.

The episode of Chanderi village is to be pondered over to ensure country's unity and integrity, some of these are: (a) the need for non-communal Central government; (b) Non-communal judiciary and law and order machinery; (c) The Supreme Court to play its independent role to pin down the Central government from using powers which have not been sanctioned by the constitution; (d) Indisciplined armed organizations be banned and culprits given exemplary punishment.

Keeping in view the whole episode and its destructive consequences, which might change the geographical face of the country, it is incumbent on the part of voters to see that they do not caste their votes for those who would criminalise the politic and communalise the services but in favour of those who would account for each and every drop of blood of the people of the land.

Inder Kumar Gujral

Inder Kumar Gujral who is the Janata Dal candidate for Parliament from Jullundur is one of those few people in the country who have maintained a sober and non-partisan attitude towards the Punjab issue during the last few years. This was not easy. Pressures were exerted from both sides. It required a degree of moral stamina to stand up to them and Gujral has successfully done so.

There was, for instance, a straight talk between him and the late Sant Longowal in March-April 1985. Gujral urged Sant ji to take a categorical stand in regard to the unity and integrity of the country. Rajiv Gandhi has used it to his advantage in the 1984 elections. Sant Longowal who had his priorities right took a few legs to redefine his position. Once he did that, there was no looking back for him. The rest is history and it should not be necessary to repeat it.

It may be recalled here that a

few years earlier he, along with Air Marshal Arjun Singh (retd.), had established what came to be called the Punjab Group in Delhi. It may not have achieved much. But the very fact is that



a certain number of responsible people felt greatly concerned at the deteriorating situation in Punjab went to show that as and when the political situation took a favourable turn, the voice of sanity would re-assert itself.

Such a situation is likely to arise within the next few months. His being a candidate from one of Punjab constituencies is a part of that unfolding situation. To send him to Parliament would be an indication that, despite all the games being played by the ruling party now in power, the two communities in the state of Punjab are prepared to work out a political settlement on terms that put a premium on Punjabis than on slogans and practices which seek to divide them.

The essential outlines of what requires to be done were worked out in three meetings (at different intervals) convened largely at his initiative. These were attended by representatives of all political parties, including the ruling party. What requires to be done now is to translate those recommendations into a political programme and that, in essence, is what his election would signify and pave the way for.

For our part we wish him success.

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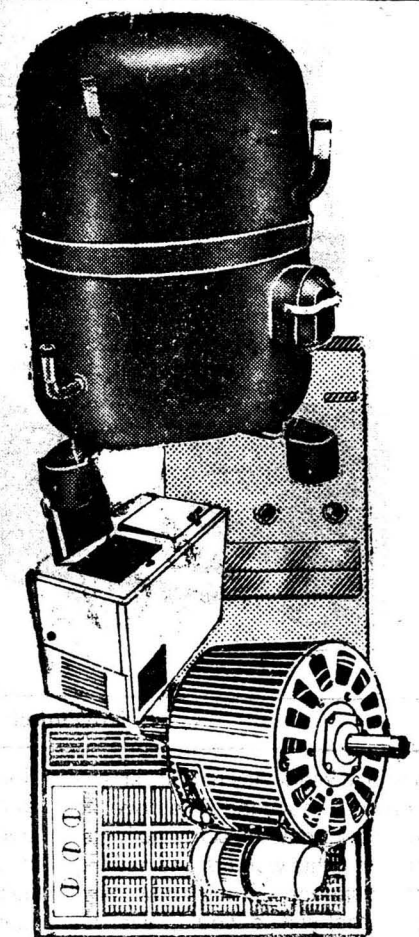
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By Talveen Singh

The widows had gathered in the small, bare room that is the Sikh Forum's office in Tilak Vihar but they were reluctant to talk. There was no point any more in telling their stories because it was going to make no difference, they said. In the

them burned alive in front of our eyes. Do we not have the right to mourn? Do we not have the right to want justice?"

Then the stories come pouring out. Five years on, it is still not possible for anyone to tell them without voices breaking, without the horror of what happened being as acute as it was then, and the small room is quickly transformed into a place of collective mourning

came home shortly after I did and said that there had been trouble on the way and that the driver who brought him had made him hide

under the seat. That night nobody felt like eating anything (because Indira Gandhi had been killed), we were watching television and we saw Rajiv Gandhi make his speech about his mother being the mother of the nation. Then they showed all those people shouting

SHA

they seemed to want to humiliate him before killing him. Then they continued to beat him with the iron rods and looted everything we had. But he didn't die, so I covered him up in a 'sheet' and sat him with a group of women outside thinking that his life would be saved. But another mob came and spotted him. They said, 'kill him because everyone else in his family is dead', and they burned him alive in front of me. Who gave them the petrol? They had bottles of alcohol in their hands, where did it come from? I recognized Kishori and Raju, these are Congress (I) men. There were policemen with them who told us we would be safe if we stayed in our houses. They fooled us, if we had fought back we could have saved some lives. They killed every man in Block 32."

After the men were massacred the women were driven off towards Chilla Gaon, on the edge of Trilokpuri, where Gurdeep Kaur saw young women raped. For three days, she says, there was no food or water and there were women who were forced to give thirsty children urine to drink to keep them alive. The mob drove them from place to place as if they were animals. Finally, when the army came they were saved and taken back to their homes to see if anyone had been left alive. At this point Gurdeep Kaur broke down completely, "We found the hand of my nephew, there were dogs eating it. Our children have been eaten by dogs and Rajiv Gandhi dares to go on about his mother? He tells us that he has done everything for us because we have been given Rs. 20,000 for every death. Let one of his children die and we will collect Rs. 20,000 from the widows of Tilak Vihar and let him see how it feels. Let him find out just how much compensation it is for the death of a young man."

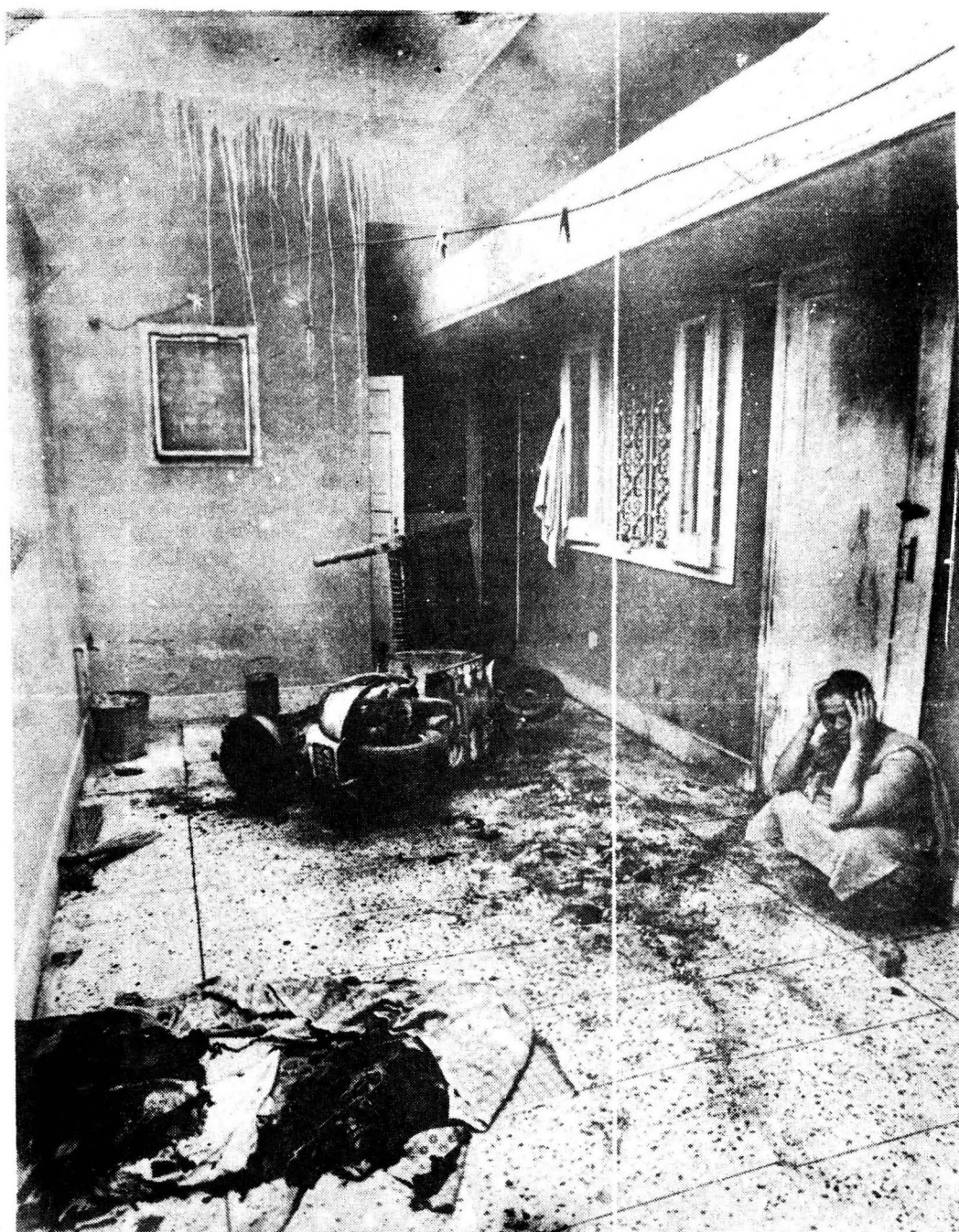
The Prime Minister's recent exoneration of Mr H.K.L. Bhagat (on the grounds that he was beside Mrs Gandhi's body in Teen Murti house) has gone down very badly with the widows of Trilokpuri, all of whom claim to have seen him at the time of the massacres. Thakuri Kaur claims that Bhagat's wife was present when Tara Singh, son of Phoondoo Singh, was killed. Kishori, Kanak Singh, Bedi and Rohtas (of Chilla Gaon) are some of the names mentioned as being those of Congress (I) workers. Since none of them have been arrested they have threatened the widows often since the massacres and have warned them that they would also be killed if they gave evidence against them.

The one thing that is not there in Tilak Vihar, however, is fear. The women claim that they have

nothing to lose and almost nothing left to live for, so they actually demand that they be quoted by name. Kamla Kaur of Sultanpuri, who lost several members of her family including her husband and son, claims that former Congress (I) MP Sajjan Kumar was present when the killings took place.

The five years since assassination have pained the widows of Tilak Vihar who watched their sons beaten to death, saw their daughters' homes looted and are no longer afraid. As children grow up with hatred, their one desire is to kill those who killed their families but also to bring them to justice.

"When I saw Sajjan Kumar, I fell at his feet and begged him to save my family but he kicked me aside. The killers—Prem Singh, Raju, Tewari, Babu Lal—these are all his men. SHO Bhatia, (of Sultanpuri police station) was also there."



November 1984: When men became beasts

past five years they had "given evidence" a thousand times over to judges, journalists, social activists, human rights workers and nothing had happened. They knew, they said, that justice would never be done as long as Rajiv Gandhi was in power. The minute the Prime Minister's name was mentioned the atmosphere seemed to suddenly change, and where there was weariness earlier there was now hate. Everyone wanted to take their turn at cursing him and everyone had a story to tell of how their children spat at the television every time his face appeared on it. "Every August 15, he tells us about his mother's death, he never stops talking about it, never stops mourning her. Does he know how we feel? He lost only one mother, we have lost sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, we have seen

filled with the ghosts of the dead and the horror of their deaths. Everyone cries for everyone else's brother, husband and son, because every woman in the room has felt the same pain."

Gurdeep Kaur of Block 32, Trilokpuri, who lost fourteen members of her immediate family, is allowed to be the first to tell her story while everyone else listens almost as if it were the first time that they heard it.

"On the day that Indira Gandhi died I went to work as usual in the export company I worked for in Noida, but by the afternoon my employer said that I should go home because there could be trouble. My son, Bhajan Singh, 25, worked as a coolie at the railway station and my other son Pritam Singh, 16, worked in a tape-recorder shop in Lajpat Nagar. He

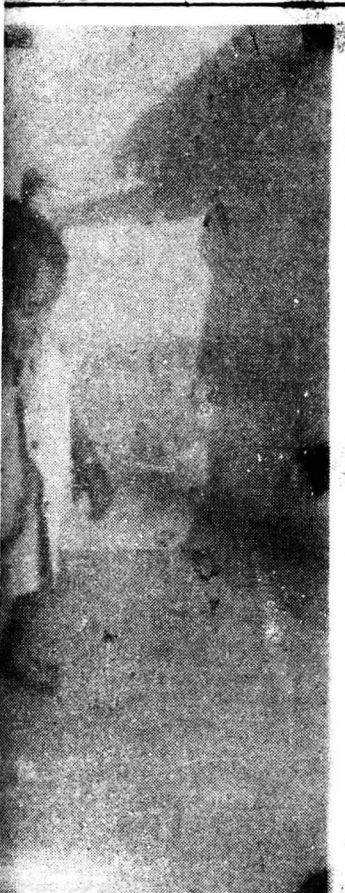
'Khoon Ka badla khoon', and immediately after this we heard trouble in the street outside. My older son went out to see what was happening because they said someone's house had been burned in Block 30. It was the last time I saw him. The next morning there was more shouting and fighting outside and I saw Rampal Suraj and Dr Ashok—these are Congress (I) leaders who are HKL Bhagat's men—organizing the mobs. That evening (November 1) they came and tried to break the door down. I cut my younger son's hair off and I leaned against the door but they were hitting it with iron rods so my arms broke. They came in, there were many of them, and started beating my son, I begged them for his life but when I tried to save him they stripped my clothes off..... in front of my son,

NAME

and after everyone in my family was dead and twenty houses in the street burned down I heard him saying, 'What, are there still so many Sikhs left alive?' Later when Rajjan Kumar came to the camp (refugee camp) with food I threw it in his face. I went mad for several weeks afterwards, I didn't

the Mrs Gandhi's passed slowly for Tilak Vihar. They, their husbands and children and burnt alive, their children raped, their children burnt, are no longer surviving. The bitterness by the desire is to see that not only their children but their futures, be justice.

know what was happening and every time I saw someone from the government I would attack them. How could they do this to us, what had we done? We didn't kill Indira Gandhi."



Severe mental trauma as a result of the pogroms (nobody calls them riots in Tilak Vihar) is a common complaint. Amar Kaur, a middle-aged woman of Block 1-32 West Sagarpura, lost her mind for several weeks and was unable even to recognise her older son who somehow survived. Her husband and younger son, Jasbir, 18, were killed on the day of Mrs Gandhi's funeral by a mob which was brought into the house by two policemen. "I had cut my son's hair off and I begged the policemen to spare them. They asked me for money so I gave them Rs. 16,000 and 20 tolas of gold, which we had saved for Jasbir's wedding. But after they took everything they beat them and then burned them alive. When I tried to save them they beat me also with iron rods so that my leg broke. I don't know what happened after that, how I got to Harinagar, who took me to the camp. When my other son came we went back to the house and we found Jasbir's head, buried under some sand....."

Amar Kaur's problems did not end with the massacre either. Her older son Shaheed Singh, who has also gone slightly mad, has now been charged with being a terrorist and nobody is prepared to give him a job because of this. Everyone in Tilak Vihar agrees that the charge is false. Amar Kaur is too old to work so she survives on a pension of Rs. 350 that she gets from the gurudwara where her husband worked as a Giani. Money is a major problem with all of Tilak Vihar's 850 widows. Most of them have been given low level government jobs which earn them approximately Rs. 1,000 a month. Of this, they spend around Rs 300 on bus fare and are left with barely Rs. 700 on which to clothe, feed and educate their families. If there is any additional expenditure like daughters' weddings or hospital bills, the widows are unable to meet it. The Sikh Forum helps out with grants for weddings and scholarships for children, but despite this they barely manage to make ends meet.

Attar Kaur, of Trilokpuri, whose son Dalip, 15, was beaten up during the massacres and has been suffering from severe mental trauma ever since, has been unable to afford to get him treated. Dalip, whose hair was forcibly shorn off at the time now sits around vacantly, unable to lead a normal life. He perks up only if someone asks him to show his scars then he lifts up his trousers to show badly swollen feet which were broken with iron rods by the mobs.

Most of Tilak Vihar's children are suffering from some form

of trauma. Those who remember what happened are given to having nightmares and hallucinating. The slightest sign of trouble or the sight of slogan-shouting procession is enough to send them into hysterics. The younger ones, those who do not remember, are being brought up on stories of what happened, so revenge and hate are the only things that motivate them. Everyone talks of sons and grandsons who say they will grow up and kill those who killed their father. Since the women are away nearly twelve hours a day, there is nobody to supervise the children's education so very few bother to go to school and many spend their day playing in the street with toy guns.

The ghetto of Tilak Vihar extends into a large cluster of jhuggis in which at least 1600 families have been living in abysmal conditions since 1984. Most of these are families who lost homes rather than relatives during the violence and moved to Tilak Vihar when the widows were moved there. Some are destitute relatives whom the widows can no longer afford to support. They are still waiting to be rehabilitated.

The most frightening thing about Tilak Vihar, is the sense of alienation that pervades every corner of the narrow streets and every nook of the tiny flats for which the government is demanding Rs 42,000 as payment.

It is an alienation not just from the government but from Hindus in general. The women talk of how they are taunted at work by women who say that they should be grateful for what the government has done for them. In the words of Gopi Kaur, "They tell us

that it is good that the sardars were killed. They say they deserved to be killed because of what happened in Punjab, then they say, look how lucky you are to get Rs. 20,000, what do the Hindus get in Punjab."

Above all, however, the alienation is from the government because of the belief that justice will never be done. The story of Jugti Ram, a policeman from Trilokpuri, is told as evidence of the massacres being the work of the government. When the killings began, a group of Sikhs went to the police station and pleaded with the policemen to help them find their children who had been abducted to Chilla Gaon where young girls were allegedly raped. Jugti Ram requested the SHO's permission to go in a jeep with his stengun for protection and several young girls were rescued. He was suspended the next day on the grounds that his duty was at the police station and he therefore had no right to go to Chilla Gaon. The Sikh Forum has been fighting his case but so far to no avail. There are other cases going on and some of the widows continue to go and give evidence in various cases but nobody has any hope left of justice.

Gopi Kaur of Sultanpuri is one of those whose case is still on. She claims that the SHO of Sultanpuri and her neighbours, a man called Prem and his sons Raju, Pappu and Danny, were responsible for her husband's death. "It was Prem who first gave us shelter in his house, then he told the mob that there were twelve sardars hiding inside. The police was with them. I begged the SHO to save us but he pushed me aside. Prem threat-

ened to kill me if I gave evidence against him but I did. They were arrested for a few days and then released on bail."

It is the same story in every case despite the Prime Minister's bizarre claim that prosecution had been launched against 2,400 people accused in 225 rioting cases. In fact, not a single killer has been punished and the Sikh Forum points out that at least 1,200 cases of murder were not even registered, even according to the official figure of deaths which is now 2,733. After five years, the government's prosecution agencies have managed to obtain a conviction in only one case of murder in which six people were sentenced to life imprisonment by the Sessions Court. The matter is now in appeal.

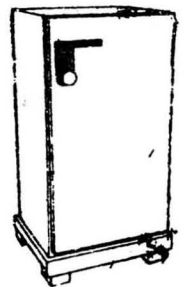
The widows point out that it is simply not possible for the government to give them justice because it would mean convicting their own men. "Will they hang H.K.L. Bhagat? If Indira Gandhi's killers can hang then why should there not be the same punishment for those who killed our men?"

Without justice—and so far there has not even been a pretence of it—Tilak Vihar's wounds will continue to fester and breed hate. Most of the anger and hate is directed at Rajiv Gandhi who is held personally responsible for what happened. His 'big tree falls earth shakes' speech is quoted as evidence of his complicity, and his exoneration of Bhagat has been the final blow.

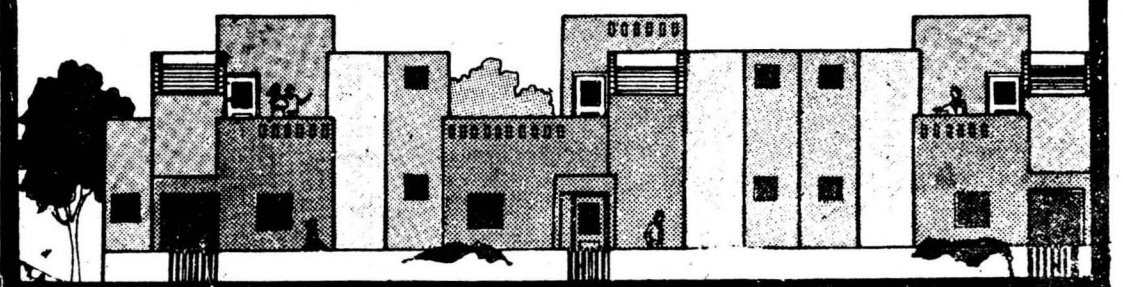
If there is anyone who still seriously believes that this government can solve the Punjab problem they should go to Tilak Vihar.

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HINDUISM

Message Of Unity In Diversity

Religion, the property of all, serves everyone. In its original form, it depended on the faith in an unseen, Supreme power, the belief being that coming into contact with it would fetch benefit. But intellectuals tried to explain religion in a different manner and their views were conveyed through scriptural literature but they had nothing to do with the common man.

Dependence on the unseen for one's own progress was accepted not only by the tribals but also by the society's higher echelons. When intellectual pursuits failed to maintain social order, religion stepped in, shouldering the responsibility to help in organizing a civilized society. Because of this, it gained social importance. This formed the basis for unifying religion with life. Even the sages of earlier years found this link essential.

The Vedas, spread by them, are intended to enable a person to derive solace here and hereafter. The Vedas guide humanity, guarantee advancement of the society and solve human problems.

The Vedas' role is seen in the form of the message of unity in diversity. Airing God's greatness is not sufficient. There may be divergent views about God. Religions may differ, according to Vedic utterances, in their details but only one God is worshipped, though in different ways and forms.

The Vedas declare that all methods of worship are valid in creating divine consciousness and in seeking Divine assistance, to overcome problems. So too, they accept the existence of differences within society. Still, to maintain social order, they insist on peaceful coexistence amongst the people of various races, languages and cultures.

The Vedas declare that all methods of worship are valid in creating divine consciousness and in seeking divine assistance, to overcome problems.

The world is wide and all can put in their efforts to achieve their objectives. There is no need for individuals to contradict one another. The Vedas also emphasise that no one can afford to sit idle, because the society will ultimately suffer. As the only concern of the Vedic statements is to ensure the welfare of all people, accepting diversity, they voice oneness.

ISLAM

Dazzles Of World

"Nor let their wealth nor their (following in) son dazzle you: Allah's plan is to punish them with these things in this world, and that their souls may perish in their (very) denial of God". (9:85)

To many this world seems to be mysterious. Many are easily lured away by the glittering of worldly objects from the right path. Sometimes, manifestation of human behaviour and its impact on human life—individually or collectively make it more mysterious. Chain of unending questions—overtakes one, particularly when there happens to be a fight between right and wrong. Usually, it is found that condition of a righteous person remains pathetic while one who is wrapped in wrongful doings gathers prosperity, favourable response and honour in the society. People, hardly go even to lend an appreciative look to a righteous cause. It becomes mysterious largely because it is held—and not wrongly held—that right belongs to the Lord. The Lord desires it to be followed. He lends it is said His support only to a righteous one. He likes wrongdoers to be marginalised. But the outward manifestations almost baffle it.

A wrong-doer seems to be more favoured in the society. He has resources and manpower. He has got wealth to cherish and promote his cause. Sons and fans are there to guarantee him support. But the Lord dealing the very case in the above verse, reminds those who uphold truth and righteousness that they should not confuse. Truth and righteousness, after all, belong to Him. However, confusing may the outward manifestation be, righteous persons are always favoured. Success ultimately, goes to them. Wrongdoers who seem to be relatively more favoured in worldly life are really trapped in the morass. If they continue to trace the wrongful track these favours are destined to be curse and punishment.



SIKHISM

"There Is No Hindu, Nor Any Muslim"

It is generally believed that the first announcement Guru Nanak made at the beginning of his mission was—"Na Ko Hindu Na Ko Musalman" (There is no Hindu nor any Muslim). It was strange and appeared more of a paradox for everyone knew that in India the two communities—Hindus and Muslims—were the main and important components of the whole of Indian population. Guru ji did not explain what he meant by it and it will be useful here to relate the story of his going to the mosque along with the Nawab and Qazi who had asked him to accompany them and participate in the ceremony of the Namaz—prayer. But in the mosque Guru Nanak kept still, standing and merely smiling whereas all the others gathered there were reciting their prayers.

After the ceremony was over both Nawab and Qazi naturally felt furious and asked Guru ji why he remained a silent spectator only. Guru ji gave the reason for his conduct as both VIPs who had invited him were merely reciting the words of the prayer and performing physical actions in a sort of mechanical way for in the minds of both fears and wishes were predominant and not the love and thought of God at all. The truth was and Guru ji told them that one was bargaining the purchase of houses in Kabul and the other was worrying that the new born one of his mares does not fall in the pit nearby and die as a result thereof. It was a lesson for all of us, the whole of mankind and for all times to come that when we visit temple, church or mosque, we do not behave like the Nawab and Qazi for that all this would be a mere farce and not acceptable to God at all.

Scholars have tried to interpret and explain the words uttered by him in the beginning of this article. Man is a man only if he has the qualities which go to make a man. Hindu and Moslem are mere outward labels—and labels howsoever bright and shining are of no

CHRISTIANITY

The Bliss Of Perfect Sympathy

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (M.t. 5,7).

Jesus was insistent that to be forgiven we must be forgiving. He finished the story of the unforgiving debtor with the warning, "So also my heavenly Father will do to everyone of you; if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." One of the disciples of Jesus, James, wrote: "For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy." (James, 2:13).

Mercy is not merely an emotional wave of pity. It denotes a sympathy which comes from an identification with the other person, seeing things as he sees them, feeling things as he feels them. The word sympathy is derived from two Greek words, syn (which means together with) and paschein (which means to experience). Sympathy means experiencing things together with the other person, going through what he is going through. This, precisely what most of us fail to do.

We are more concerned with our own feelings than those of others. If we did make a deliberate attempt to get inside the other person's mind and heart, it would obviously make a very great difference in our dealing with others. It would save us from being kind in the wrong way. An obvious example is the kind of hospitality some people practise. I have often been a victim of such misguided hospitality. Often I am forced by my hosts to take soft drinks and certain sweets which I thoroughly dislike and are injurious to my health. I have to suffer in order to please my hosts! If only they knew the harm they are doing me.

True sympathy would make forgiveness easy. There is always a reason why a person thinks and acts as he does, and if we knew that reason it would be so much easier to understand and to sympathize and to forgive.

— Fr. George

value if inside that person there is no merit or character.

Guru Nanak took a lot of pains to reform, improve and build up fire traits inside us, so produce a fine man indeed, a model for others—not only with character building but even developing spiritual qualities and reach up to a stage of fine balance in spirit and frame of mind.

Not only Guru Nanak but his nine successors and the permanent and present Guru of the Sikhs—Guru Granth Sahib—al keep on doing this. So we must see that anyone, whether Hindu or Moslem, Sikh or Christian, while praying, is particularly careful that it is not mere uttering of words, only lips moving but the prayers should be from our heart as we are addressing the Highest.

Principal (Retd.)
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FOR LIGHT AND SOFT HAIR-FIXING





By Anil Dutta Mishra

Youth And The Elections

group 18-21 in the voter list and definitely most of them belong to student category with variegated affiliations. To have a view of prevalent mentality of this new-group, I surveyed a bunch of students in the various colleges of Delhi University coming from different regions of the country.

In the Kirori Mal college when such a survey was conducted students came with anti-establishment. Gyaneshwar Pathak of B.A.(Eco) Hons. said "present day Indian politics is characterised by corruption, communalisation and criminalisation. The nepotistic and despotic way of Rajiv regime has disastrously led the country to the brink of disintegration. In my view Indra and his sons has vitiated the political blood of the country to such an extent that mortality is a word which is devoid of any relevance for present gaddi-seekers. Moreover, Rajiv doesn't know the intricacies of fail-politics and he is always run by a select bunch of coterie who is beneficiary of the mega-deals on the cost of nation's prestige, integrity and sovereignty. So for the reversal of this vicious trend the change of leadership is necessary and for this we have to resort to Opposition. Granted, that it is fragmented, nevertheless it will be undoubtedly better for the pre-

servation of our democratic institutions."

Deven Bharti, a student of Geography (Hons) told "Congress(I) is devoid of all forces. They have cheated the nation—Bofors being one of the flagrant examples. But in any sense Bofors isn't going to be an election issue in a country like money and muscle power, which can muster support for its candidates. So to conclude, it is ironical that despite an orgy of misdeeds Congress will be back to power, although with a narrow margin. Mrinal (Chemistry), Solomon (History) and Minoj Kumar Pingu (Botany) rendered the same opinion.

Contrary to KMC boys Stephensians shown their proclivity in favour of Congress(I). Rupa Ganguly (History) said—"Opposition is a temporary alliance of selfish forces where ultimately motives of self-aggrandisement will affect the decisions. Moreover there are as of many as six contenders for premiership and no one of them will feel content in anything less than that *gaddi*, so at last the fate of Janata (1977) will be repeated, in less than one month. So for stability, Congress should be brought in the saddle. Kanchan (History) and Shiladitya (Economics) had the same opinion.

In Hindu College there was

mixed opinion. Some students supported the cause of Congress whereas some were strongly advocating the cause of Opposition.

In Law Centre, S.N. Singh said, "politics without corruption is a myth in Indianscene, nevertheless Opposition is subject to some moral-restraints whereas Congress has blatantly and flagrantly violated all the established norms of politics."


Vinod Pandey, Research Scholar in Chinese and Japanese Studies, said, "if we want to save our democracy from turning into a dictatorship then we must vote Opposition to power as in a parliamentary form of government both the government and the Opposition though play a different but significant roll in smooth running of democracy."

Denoti Prasad Sinha (doing Ph D in Political Science), said, "Indeed, Rajiv Gandhi should be voted to power and I will exercise my franchise in favour of them. To me political stability is more important than party rivalry. The electoral arrangements made by the Opposition members will not bring Janata Dal to power. Congress (I) had wider political base and widespread party organization. It is due to this factor that party organization will provide stability and

strength to the system of which we are a part. If democracy is to survive in India, the device of institution-building must be strengthened which is possible in Rajiv's hand. I would have voted for V.P. Singh had he opted for Amethi constituency.

Savita Pandey, a research scholar in Sanskrit, believes that though both the ruling party and the Opposition may be having the same vested interests in politics as they belong to the same class but still blame for the present conditions of the country has to be put squarely on the Congress (I) because since independence, for most of the period, they were the ones who formed government and ruled the country.

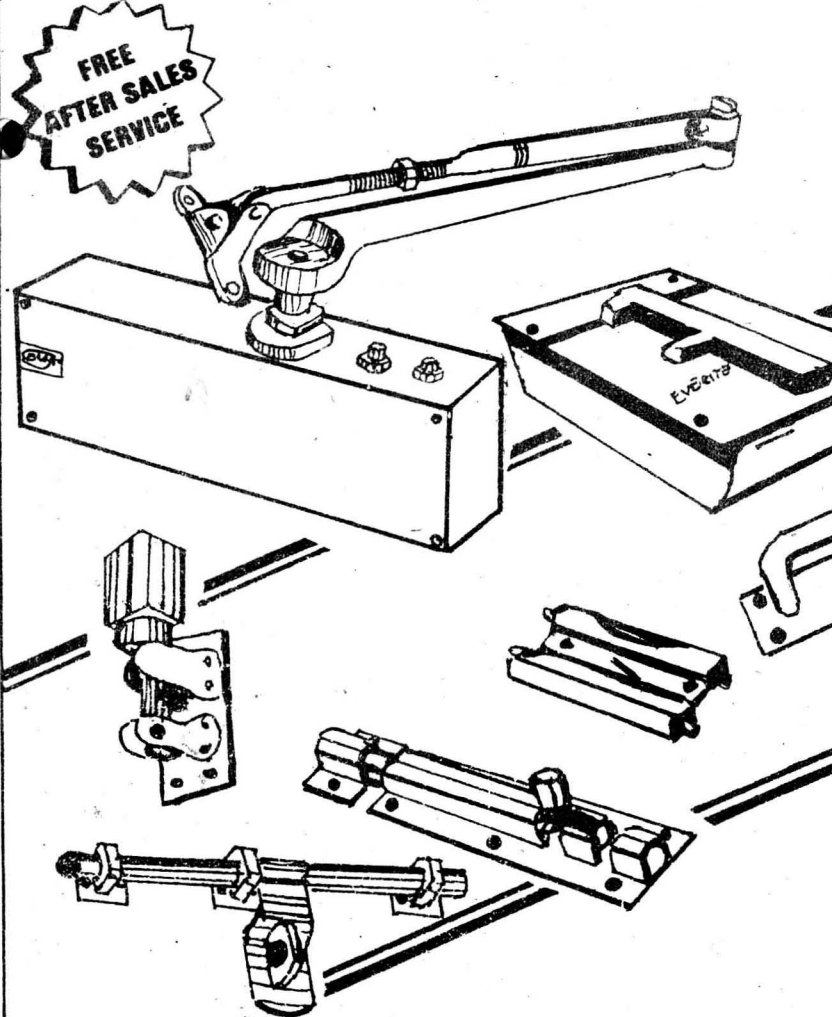
After a balanced evaluation of all these views, it can be said that the youth in general feels that the Opposition should be given a chance accepting that it is fragmented. But in a sense it is a boon in disguise as there will be different shades of opinions on the issues of national interests and any step will be taken only after the due-diliberation of the ruling body unlike the present process of feudalistic decision-making. For a rapid development of a democratic nation, it is essential that policy decisions should have a mass support in decision making bodies and authoritative trends should be deprecated. And surely, this trend's reversal is possible only when Rajiv (Mr Clean) is out of scene which necessitates the ouster of the Congress-regime.

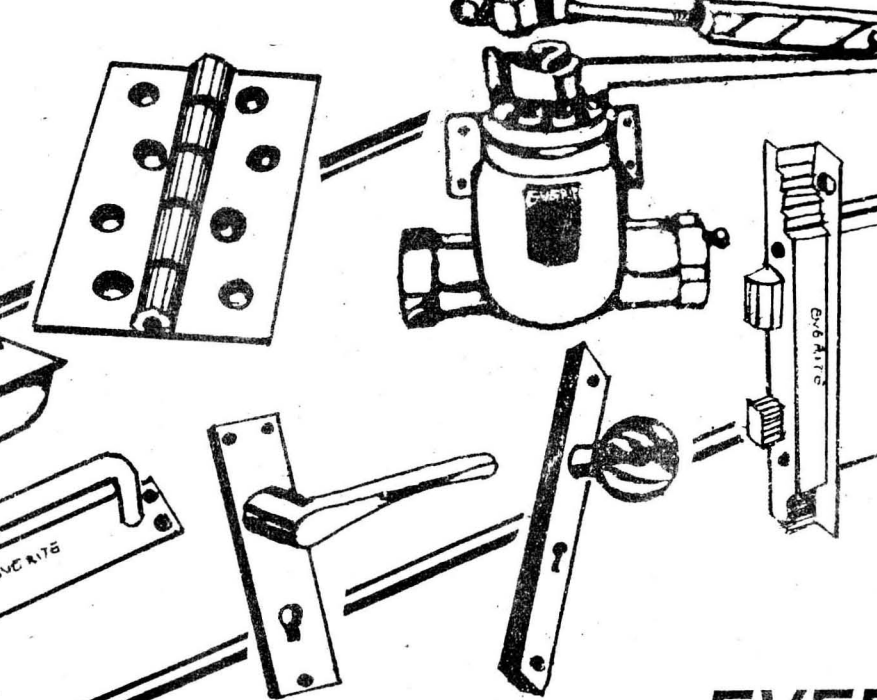


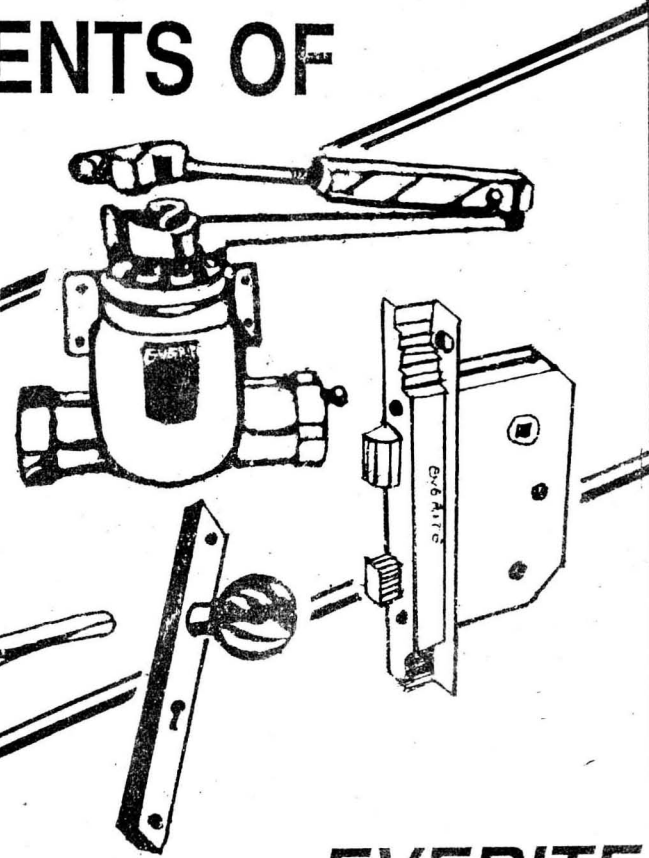
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Nishant Natya Manch

The Plays People Understand

By Bharat Dogra

September 13. The news that two street plays will be staged by Nishant Natya Manch at 5 P.M. has reached at least some people in Delhi's Chandra-shekhar Azad hut colony. At the right time several artists reach here from various places. One artist is very ill, still he not only manages to come but declares himself fit for playing an important role (as it turns out, the role is that of a doctor). Some hut-dwellers are also going to present Bhojpuri songs. Trade Union activists active among the workers are also present.

To the beat of small drum-like instruments (dafis) the group walks towards the site where plays are to be staged (on a road corner which is located between a row of factories on one side and huts on the other) announcing the plays as they go. Several persons have already attached themselves to the colourful group by the time it reaches the site of plays, while several others, I notice, are following.

After reaching the site the artists form a circle by holding each other's hands. Plays will be enacted within this circle. The audience continues to gather quite rapidly around this circle. The children in the front rows are the most enthusiastic—as always. A small child has rushed naked to the play site and his mother shouts at him from the nearby hut. But the child won't budge from his front row, best view seat.

The show starts with some songs, mostly about injustices and inequalities and calling for the mobilization of people to correct these. The show is just picking up when a truck turns up and the driver wants to pass. Artists and people reason with him to take a different route. But the truck driver and his cleaner think otherwise. They come out of the truck and sit on the engine. They've decided to see the performance and leave only after this. Other viewers are grateful to them, for they can now climb the truck and get a better view. Some cart pullers are already on their carts to get a good view.

The first play 'Gadda' (ditch) has started. Based on a short story by Krishna Chander, this play has been adapted not only to include comment on contemporary political and social scene, but also to include comment on recent happenings in the hut-colony such as a recent fire accident. In the play a woman worker running away from this fire has fallen in a deep ditch and she appeals to all passers-by to help her in getting out of this ditch. It is through the selfish response of various people

to her appeals that the play makes most of its social comment, indicting various religious, political and other vested interests. The play is able to fully hold the attention of the audience. Laughing and smiling in response to the various situations in the play, the people appeared to be also becoming responsive towards its social messages.

The first play is followed by another song. A trade union leader now addresses the workers to tell them about a report that the union has prepared on the health-hazards of workers. Nishant activists inform people about the various books and a cassette of their songs brought out by them. It is the time now for the second play to start.

In this play an effort is made to expose the malpractices of various government departments—a ration card office, police station, a hospital through the travails of a person who has to go to these various places to get his work done. While this play is liked by the audience, there are certain parts during which the play fails to hold their attention and several persons in the audience start talking to each other. Now it becomes difficult for others also to follow, the play. This shows how the simple looking work of street theatre is actually so difficult as even a short time loss of interest can create a near-crisis situation.

At this stage an experienced artist performs a rescue act by linking up—even the noise being made by some persons in the audience to the situation in the play. This artist is playing the role of a doctor in a government hospital and tells the people—listen those who keep talking today will not be examined by me today. People appreciate this and slightly embarrassed, they again become attentive towards the play.

At the end of the play the artists thank the audience and request them to make a small contribution. Some hut-dwellers come forward to give coins. The group of artists starts returning to the rhythm of lively songs and slogans.

Thousands of such performances in villages and slums have been held by Nishant Natya Manch. Nishant artists believe that in the present condition of society the relevance of their work exists mainly in going to workers and peasants and enacting plays on society's problems and ways of emerging out of these. For them the success of their art lies in the extent to which people become anxious of the real causes of their problems and are motivated to fight against these causes. Nishant's songs and plays have spoken against several social evils, but they've given special importance to the campaign against communalism. Some of

the well-known plays enacted by Nishant include Girgit (on the opportunistic attitudes of officials), *Miyan Ki Jotti*, *Miyan ka Ser* (against religious superstitions) *Ab Na Sahenge jor Kisika* (against inflation) *Sabse Sasta gosht* (against communalism) and *Kaun hai iska Zimmedar* (against the causes of epidemics).

This street theatre group started working under the name of 'Nishant' in 1976, but even earlier some of its activists were working in street play for an organization called Mukti (started by Srilata Swaminathan with some other friends) since 1971. 'Mukti' had enacted '*Miyan Ki Jooti Muya Ka Sar*' among construction workers as early as in 1971.

Since then apart from giving a very large number of performance in Delhi the Nishant team has also gone to Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Garhwal to give performances. Nishant has also helped the emergence of some street theatre groups in smaller

towns. Apart from Hindi, Nishant has performed in Punjabi, Haryanies, Bhojpuri and Nepali languages.

During some programmes Nishant artists have faced beatings and attacks with iron rods by hired goons of some factory owners. Several artists including a child were injured in this attack.

More recently a demonstration in front of Shastri Bhawan, Delhi, Nishant artists enacting plans on the language issue were beaten up by the police. Next day the Nishant team was to give another performance in a village. Notwithstanding this attack and injuries, they fulfilled their commitment.

Nishant follows the approach of collective direction when a play on a particular issue is to be enacted. Team-workers think up some episode on the basis of their ideas as well as actual experiences. These are then woven into a play. By following this method they are able to prepare plays very soon on topical issues. On the language issue

recently they were able to prepare a play in just nine hours to cope with the needs of a protest demonstration for this play. Old plays are changed substantially to weave in contemporary happenings and to cope with the problems of the area where a play is being enacted. In this way even old plays seem to be very well adapted to new locations and happenings.

'A family dedicated to theatre for workers and peasants'

Shamsul Islam is widely known not only as the most experienced artist of Nishant Natya Manch, but also for his intense involvement in many other social concerns and activities.

His wife, Neelima, has also been associated closely with the street theatre movement. She has travelled to remote villages to perform in plays overcoming various social obstacles in this effort.

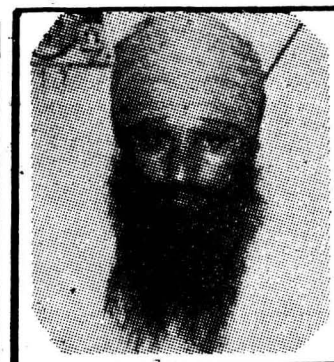
Shiri, daughter of Shamsul and Neelima and their only child, has also been seen in a number of performance of Nishant. She was even injured in an attack on Nishant artists, but this has failed to discourage her participating in Nishant's songs and plays.

—NFS th

"I'm Afraid Of The Government"

In this issue we bring you another story of a young man who was sent to Jodhpur after the Operation Bluestar. 31 year old Surjit Singh, son of S. Gujar Singh, a Jat Sikh of village Wadala Kalan, Police Station Bias, District Amritsar is an Amritdhari young Sikh who has been recently released from Jodhpur jail, and his story as related by himself follows:

"I, also went to pay my homage to Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, on 3rd June 1984, on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Devji. In the evening when I tried to return, police did not allow me. So I went



to Nabha jail I was put in *chakian*. On 9th March '85 with a burqa on, head cover I was sent to Jodhpur by air. As soon as I reached there

I began learning the reading of Guru Granth Sahib and also learnt playing on jori table. I had only passed 5th class in the school at my village.

"I have a just and strong grudge against the government. For no fault or crime I was kept a prisoner for five years. Four false cases were made to involve me and I was acquitted in all. From Jodhpur I was sent to Adampur on 10th March by air to that very day I was kept in the Central jail, Jullundur and kept there till 21st March and on 22nd I was sent to Police Civil Lines, Amritsar and then to Jodh-

TALES FROM JODHPUR JAIL

back and stayed in G.R. Das Sarai. On the 4th June in the morning, I took bath in the holy Sarowar, suddenly firing had started and I returned to Sarai quickly. On the 6th June morning I was arrested with 25-30 other pilgrims and after a month-and-a-half. I was sent to a military camp where inhuman tortures were perpetrated on me.

"In August 1984 I was charged under NSA and sent to Nabha Jail where I was kept for 6-7 months. During this period I was sent to Ladha Kothi for a month. The tortures went on and secret enquiries were made. When I came back

I was put again in *chakian*. In the beginning the behaviour of jail officers was good but when there was a quarrel with the Sikh inmates and alarm was introduced in jail from that day onwards the attitude of the jail authorities became hard.

"Interviews were allowed from a pretty good distance. The food especially pulses and vegetables were of very poor quality and children were added, deliberately, in large quantity. The chapattis were either burnt or under-cooked. The medical treatment was very unsatisfactory and no medicines were available. Even drinking water was not readily available. When in jail

pur. I was produced before the Magistrate and I was acquitted in all the four courts, and released 20th April.

"I will look after my land, but I am still afraid that government may again arrest me without any cause by fabricating a case like the previous ones. So I have not gone to my village and am staying with my relatives. I wish that the various Akali Dals should unite, then only the government will concede to our demands. Government should release at once all innocent persons so that the political atmosphere of Punjab can be cleared and solved peacefully."

The Policy Perspective

Continued from page 12

Muslim, Christian and Sikh. From Indira Gandhi's address to the Stockholm Conference in 1972 to Rajiv Gandhi's address to the United Nations in 1988, India's leaders articulated the environmental concern of India effectively.

The Government has taken necessary legislative, organizational and administrative steps for meeting environmental challenges. Important legislations for regulating factories, industries, mines, atomic energy, insecticides, for protecting forests and wildlife and for preventing and controlling pollution of water and air have been enacted to supplement earlier legislations. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, is a comprehensive enactment which closed the gaps in earlier legislations. The existing infrastructure has been further strengthened to implement the legislation and a vast network of scientific institutions with laboratories and equipments have been set up.

Alternative sources of energy such as biogas, solar energy and wind energy are being promoted in the rural areas to reduce the pressure on forests. The afforestation programmes have been given new dynamism with the constitution of the National Wasteland Development Board in 1985. A new Technology Mission to tackle the problem of wastelands is being introduced now to strengthen the existing efforts. Thirteen biosphere reserves have been planned to be set up to conserve specific ecosystems of which seven have already been set up. Action plans have been taken up for preservation of mangroves and wetlands of the country. Special attention is being given for environmentally sound development of the islands of the country. The conservation attempts had spectacular success in cases such as the Project Tiger. The Government is attempting to have a comprehensive National Conservation Strategy drafted.

Protecting Water Quality

The efforts to protect water quality used to be essentially through the implementation of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. The problem of disposal of human wastes into the rivers, however, is proving to be intractable with the local bodies finding it difficult to set up the necessary sanitation measures due to lack of finance. The Government of India has, therefore, stepped in and has taken the river Ganga—India's most important river—for cleaning up. The scheme taken up at a cost of Rs.300 crores is a massive effort to clean the river through an integrated set of measures such as low cost sanitation, river front development, construction of electric crematoria, etc. The scheme has an extensive awareness and public involvement programme to elicit participation of youth, students and pilgrims. The plan has already yielded significant results.

The steps taken to prevent pollution at the recent religious congregation at Allahabad, the Kumbh Mela, when on a single day 15 million pilgrims took bath in the river, have won the appreciation of all. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 has enabled the Government to make a beginning in tackling the problems by monitoring the air quality at 80 locations, notification of standards for emission and enforcement.

Environmental Management

Scientific infrastructure for research, education and training for the protection of the environment has already been developed. The Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education, the Botanical and Zoological Surveys of India, and the Industrial Toxicology Research Centre are some of the leading institutions. Besides these nearly 150 universities and the laboratories of the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR) provide infrastructure for research. The National Council of Educational Research and Training has incorporated environmental education in the syllabi of schools right from the 1st standard in almost all the languages of India. The universities run specialized courses in different environmental sciences. The Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, and the National Museum of Natural History, New Delhi, promote environmental education at the non-formal level and produce resource material for the purpose.

An informed public is the sine qua non for the success of environmental protection programmes. The environmental movement in India has been furthered by non-governmental organizations even in the early 70s. More than 500 voluntary organizations are active throughout the country. Thanks to the encouragement given by the Government, there is continuous National Environment Awareness Campaign sponsored by Government and implemented through voluntary organizations with liberal financial assistance. All the media of the country such as TV, newspapers and radio have regular programmes on environmental protection. The Environmental Acts contain provisions for the public to approach courts to take action against violators of environment laws and for the official agencies to provide the necessary information to the citizens.

Global Concern

India, since the early seventies, has taken an active part in global efforts to tackle environmental problems. It has actively contributed to the activities of the various U.N. agencies in their efforts to study the global problems. It shares the concern of all the countries of the world regarding global warming and ozone layer depletion and would support all the initiatives to protect the global environment. It has backed the Antarctic Convention and is a signatory to several global conventions.

The solution of global environmental problems can come about quickly if some basic principles are realised. Certain global problems have arisen through the industrial activities of mankind in developed countries. Certain other global problems have arisen due to the poverty of the bulk of humanity. Whatever be the causes, it is clear that the effects are global in nature. All aspects of international relation—trade, technology and cultural transfers, communications and information—affect the environment of all countries. This has created opportunities which, if seized, could lead to a more prosperous and secure world. Protection of global environment is possible only if all the nations are enabled to take necessary measures.

The solutions to global environmental problems are clear. The countries which have contributed to the global problems through their industrial activities have to curb these activities to the extent necessary. The countries who have contributed to the global problems because of the poverty of their people have to develop at a faster pace to remove the primary cause of poverty and guide their development process so that the environment does not deteriorate further. The world has to find the resources to accelerate the poverty alleviation process and transfer the necessary technology to the poorer nations at a viable price. All the countries will have to be helped through international cooperation to regenerate the degraded parts of the environment. The help has to be through transfer of technology and resources as well as through education, awareness and training.

The environmental scene in India offers us many reasons to rejoice even though many problems are yet to be solved. The nation is fully aware of the environmental problems and in the words of our Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, "India has been something of pioneer in recognizing that conservation is not to the detriment of economic growth but the pre-condition for sustained development". The solutions are known. New legislation has augmented the government's authority to enforce the protection of environment. The grassroots organizations have developed well and are willing to take action for the environment protection. Most importantly, the Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, has time and again stressed the importance of environmental protection and is prepared to support the environmental movement fully. All these factors give us reasons for hope that we will reach a standard of environmental protection second to none in the world in the near future.

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Environment Protection

The Policy Perspective

By Ziaur Rahman Ansari

Environmental problems have attracted the attention of a wide cross-section of people all over the world during the last two decades. People are becoming increasingly conscious of a variety of problems like global warming, ozone layer depletion, acid rain, famines, droughts, floods, scarcity of fuel, firewood and fodder, pollution of air and water and problems from hazardous chemicals and radiation which have adverse effects on the environment. No nation in the world has been spared nor any citizen untouched.

India, at the time of independence, was among the poorest countries with little infrastructure for development. The founding fathers of the nation led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru realised that political independence will have meaning to its citizens only if it helps them to quickly get out of the morass of poverty. Thus has started, in the words of Indira Gandhi "an enterprise unparalleled in human history—the provision of basic needs to one-sixth of mankind within the span of one or two generations". The results, in making the infrastructure of the country stronger and in reversing the trend of poverty and its symptoms, have been commensurate with the efforts. The literacy rate has increased to 36.2 per cent. Death rate has come down from 27.4 per thousand to 11.9 per thousand. Food production has jumped up by 300 per cent from 50 million tonnes at the time of independence. Every indicator of quality of life has shown betterment.

A Disheartening Trend

It is in the early seventies that, along with the rest of the countries in the world, India realised another disheartening trend. The same efforts which helped bring people above the poverty line also put greater pressure on the natural resources of the country. Irrigation facilities provided also produced salinity in the land. Industrial development provided products but also polluted water and air. Medical facilities improved the health of the people but increased the demand for the products of nature. Poverty is the fundamental cause which makes people over-exploit the natural resources of the country like land, forests and water for meeting their basic needs, for employment, for shelter, for fuel and fodder for their cattle. As Indira Gandhi put it in her address to the Stockholm conference, "Poverty and need are indeed the greatest polluters".

Land Degradation

Land is the basic resource for providing the needs of the people. Land degradation is an important environmental problem. It is estimated that nearly 100 million hectares of land, almost one-third of the total area, have been affected by land degradation caused by soil erosion, salinity, alkalinity, wind erosion, etc. Out of the 300 million hectares of land available in the country only about 150 million hectares is cropped. The productivity of the land has to increase from the present 150 MT to 275 MT in order to feed the population by the year 2000. Soil erosion is a matter of serious concern to India. Deforestation and cultivation of marginal lands have, it is estimated, led to a loss of 6000 million tonnes of soil annually resulting in loss of productivity. The livestock population of India has increased from about 280 million in 1951 to about 375 million. About 13 million hectares of land is classified as pastures but much of this has been diverted to agriculture by the poor and most of the rest is degraded. Animals have to scrounge for whatever they can get on the fallow lands and on forest lands. Overgrazing has led to further land degradation.

Deforestation

The forests of India occupy an area of about 75 million hectares i.e., 22 per cent of the land area. These forests supply the demands of people for timber, fuelwood and minor forest products. However, with the increase in human and cattle population the biotic pressures have become intense. In addition, industrialization has brought about increase in demand for wood. In the early years of independence the degraded forest land was diverted for agricultural purposes. In addition, development projects such as hydro-electric projects and industries claimed their share of forest land. A combined result of these causes has reduced the forest cover to about 19 per cent of the area between 1972 and 1982.

The average annual water resource of India is estimated to be about 400 Million Hectare Metres (MHM). Out of this, however, about 300 MHM is received by rainfall during the four months of monsoon. The vegetation cover which existed in earlier times used to hold back the monsoon waters and release them steadily after augmenting the ground water. With deforestation, this cushion is gradually disappearing and the water availability is becoming uneven. A high rainfall would result in flood while a deviation below the normal would create a drought. Floods carry the soil with them, leading to silting of rivers and reservoirs. This alternating cycle

of floods and droughts has been steadily increasing. The annual expenditure on meeting the floods and droughts has reached a level

tries. Untreated human wastes from towns and cities reach the water courses. These discharges affect the quality of surface water

cities has revealed problem of excessive sulphur dioxide in some locations. Automobile pollution is becoming a problem in metropolitan cities, particularly in Delhi and Bombay.

India's growing population and rapid urbanisation have resulted in an enormous burden on human settlements. By the year 2000, the urban population will touch the figure of 400 million. Planning for this urban colossus is a herculean task. The shortages in housing, potable water and sanitation are already enormous and will grow further unless remedial action is taken in time.

Response To The Challenges

The Indian tradition of conservation can be traced back to pre-historic times. The theme of conservation pervades Indian culture, art and all its religions: Hindu,

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The world has to find the resources to accelerate the poverty alleviation process and transfer the necessary technology to the poorer nations at a viable price. All the countries will have to be helped through international cooperation to regenerate the degraded parts of the environment. The help has to be through transfer of technology and resources as well as through education, awareness and training.

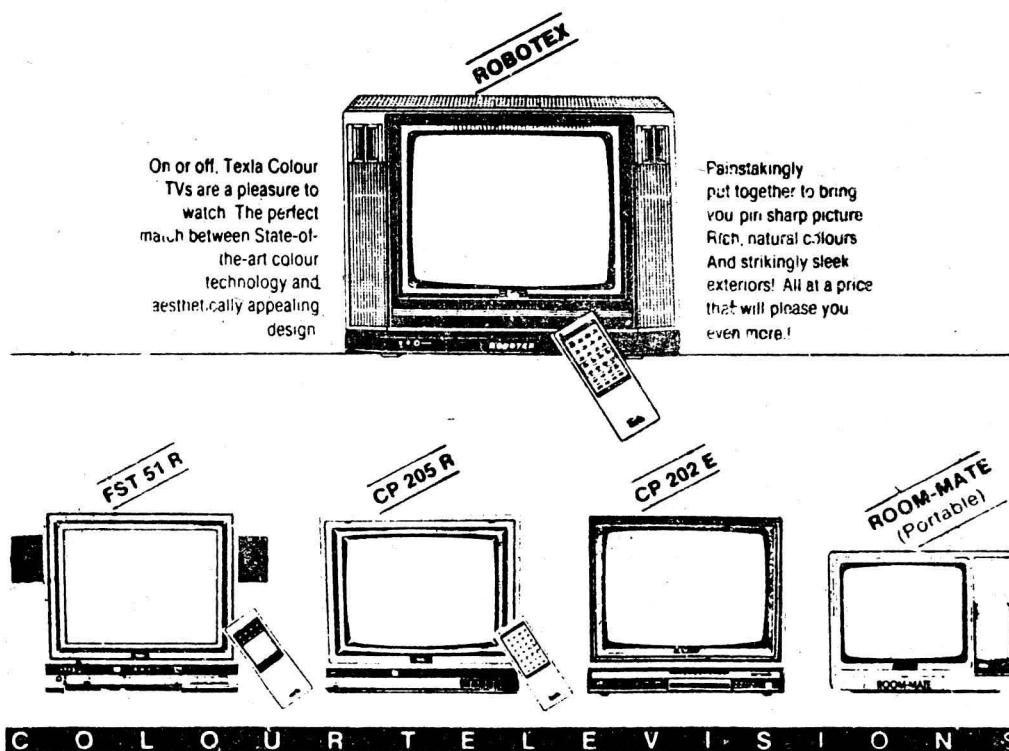
of Rs.1500 crores.

Industrialization has posed a threat to water quality through effluents discharged from indus-

and ground water. The problems of air pollution are beginning to be felt in India with the accelerated industrial tempo. A survey of the

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